# THE TRANSITION TO NIBRS
# A GUIDE FOR ATPA DIRECTORS

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# Executive Summary

The Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) is responding to law enforcement's call to upgrade the collection and dissemination of the nation's crime statistics. To accomplish this, the Unified Crime Reporting (UCR) Program is transitioning from the Summary Reporting System (SRS) to the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS) by January 1, 2021. The FBI's transition to a NIBRS only data will improve the nation's crime data collection with greater focus on the offenses included in the crime activity.

The purpose of this document is to provide an overview of SRS and NIBRS to auto theft prevention authority (ATPA) directors regarding the specifics of the changes to crime reporting and how those changes will affect crime statistics.

There are four main points of this document that will help ATPA directors with the NIBRS transition:

- SRS's Hierarchy Rule
- What is NIBRS
- Advantages of NIBRS
- Crime Data Explorer

The Hierarchy Rule in SRS states that when there is more than one offense within an incident, only the most serious crime can be reported by the agency in their monthly crime totals. Using SRS data may not allow agencies to identify the true nature of the crime problem in their community. For this reason the transition to NIBRS will provide a more accurate and detailed account of crime; agencies will be able to count up to ten offenses for each incident of crime.

The FBI's Crime Data Explorer (CDE) will dramatically change how the crime data from the UCR Program is presented. The goal of CDE is to update crime data regularly to help law enforcement officials, public leaders and researchers, all of whom rely on this information, to protect their communities.

CDE provides many useful tools, one of which is an interactive map that allows users to convert crime statistics to create reports with graphs that help visualize crime data for selected areas. NIBRS and CDE will give law enforcement agencies the ability to make valid conclusions about crime that is occurring in their community and allocate resources appropriately. CDE and NIBRS will also empower other stakeholders with more detailed information to assess the occurrence of crime for a variety of uses.

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## History of Uniform Crime Reporting[1]

Recognizing a need for national crime statistics, the International Association of Chiefs of Police (IACP) formed the Committee on Uniform Crime Records in 1927 to develop a system for collecting uniform police statistics. The members evaluated crimes based on their seriousness, frequency of occurrence, geographic pervasiveness, and likelihood of being reported to law enforcement. After completing this assessment, the Committee identified seven crimes to be reported to the FBI UCR Program: murder, rape, robbery, aggravated assault, burglary, motor vehicle theft, and larceny. These seven offenses were referred to as Crime Index offenses because they illustrate the extent to which crime would increase or decrease in the United States.

In 1930, the FBI was tasked with collecting, publishing, and archiving this information. The crime data received by the FBI today is from more than 18,000 law enforcement agencies that voluntarily participate in the program.

In 1979, arson was added to the Crime Index. In 2003 the Crime Index was discontinued and was changed to Part I crimes. In 2013, commercial sex and human trafficking was added to Part I crimes.

Today, the UCR Program consists of four data collections: The National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS), the Summary Reporting System (SRS), the Law Enforcement Officers Killed and Assaulted (LEOKA) Program, and the Hate Crime Statistics Program. Each year the UCR publishes a preliminary and annual report for each of its programs. There are two ways law enforcement agencies submit crime data to the FBI; either through submission to a state UCR Program or directly to the FBI's UCR Program.

## Classifying and Scoring[2]

Classifying and scoring offenses are two functions a law enforcement agency must accomplish prior to reporting crime in the UCR Program.

**Classifying** is determining the proper crime categories in which to report offenses in UCR. The offense's classification is based on the facts of an agency's investigation of crime.

**Scoring** is counting the number of offenses after they have been classified. The appropriate scoring of Part I crimes is directly related to the two types of crimes involved; crimes against the person and crimes against property.

The reporting of known offenses is limited to the following crime classification because they are the most serious and most commonly reported crimes occurring in all areas of the United States.

Part I offense classifications include:

- Criminal Homicide
- Rape
- Robbery
- Aggravated Assault
- Burglary
- Larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft)

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[1] https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/summary-reporting-system-srs-user-manual pg. 12-13
[2] https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/summary-reporting-system-srs-user-manual pg. 20-22

- Motor Vehicle Theft
- Arson
- Human Trafficking Commercial Sex Acts
- Human Trafficking Involuntary Servitude.

Part II offenses encompass all other reportable classifications outside those defined as Part I. LEAs report to the FBI only arrest data involving the following Part II crimes:

- Other Assaults
- Forgery and Counterfeiting
- Fraud
- Embezzlement
- Stolen Property (Buying and Receiving Possessing)
- Vandalism
- Sex Offenses (except Rape and Prostitution offenses)
- Drug Abuse Violations
- Gambling
- Offenses Against the Family and Children
- Driving Under the Influence
- Liquor Laws
- Drunkenness
- Disorderly Conduct
- Vagrancy
- All other Offenses
- Suspicion
- Curfew and Loitering Laws- (Persons under 18)
- Runaways (Persons under18)
- Prostitution (Prostitution and Commercialized Vice Assisting or Promoting Prostitution Purchasing Prostitution)
- Weapons (Carrying, Possessing, etc.)

## SRS's Hierarchy Rule[3]

The offenses in the SRS are ranked in terms of severity and only the highest-ranked offense is reported in incidents that have multiple offenses. There is an exception to this rule when it comes to three offenses: Arson, Human Trafficking-Commercial Sex Acts and Human Trafficking-Involuntary Servitude. These offenses do not follow the Hierarchy Rule because they are always reported if present.  The offenses for SRS are reported in the following hierarchal order:

1. Criminal Homicide (Murder and Non-negligent Manslaughter and Manslaughter by Negligence)
2. Rape (Rape, Attempts to Commit Rape and Historical Rape)
3. Robbery (Firearm, Knife or Cutting Instrument, Other Dangerous Weapon and Strong-arm – Hands, Fists, Feet, etc.)

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[3] https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/summary-reporting-system-srs-user-manual pg.23-26
https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2014/resource-pages/effects_of_nibrs_on_crime_statistics_final.pdf pg.11-12

4. Aggravated Assault (Firearm, Knife or Cutting Instrument, Other Dangerous Weapon and Strong-arm – Hands, Fists, Feet, etc.)
5. Burglary (Forcible Entry, Unlawful Entry- No Force and Attempted Forcible Entry)
6. Larceny-theft (except motor vehicle theft)
7. Motor Vehicle Theft (Autos, Trucks and Buses and Other Vehicles)

As mentioned previously, the following Part I Crimes ignore the Hierarchy Rule:

8. Arson (Structural, Mobile and Other)
9. Human Trafficking, Commercial Sex Acts
10. Human Trafficking, Involuntary Servitude

LEAs must decide whether the crime committed is a Part I offense and, if so, score the crime accordingly. The determination of multiple Part I offenses requires the agency to list the offense that is the highest on the Hierarchy chart.

The Hierarchy Rule is only used for crime reporting and does not affect the number of charges for which the defendant may be prosecuted.

The following scenarios demonstrate how the Hierarchy Rule is reported in a multiple-offense incident:

1. Two women broke into a new car dealership after closing hours. They took the cash from the dealership's office safe and two new automobiles from the garage.

   **Applying the Hierarchy Rule to crime reporting:** A Burglary-Forcible Entry (5a) and Motor Vehicle Theft (7a) were committed. Following the Hierarchy Rule, only the Burglary- Forcible Entry (5a), the highest of the offenses on the list of Part I offenses, is scored and reported.

2. A burglar broke into a home, stole several items, and placed them in a car belonging to the owner of the home. The homeowner returned and surprised the thief, who in turn knocked the owner unconscious by hitting him over the head with a chair. The burglar drove away in the homeowner's car.

   **Applying the Hierarchy Rule to crime reporting:** A Burglary-Forcible Entry (5a), Robbery- Other Dangerous Weapon (3c), Aggravated Assault- Other Dangerous Weapon (4c), and Motor Vehicle Theft- Auto (7a) occurred in this incident. After classifying the offenses, the reporting agency scores only one offense- Robbery- Other Dangerous Weapon (3c) the crime appearing first in the list of Part I offenses.

As illustrated above, the examples cause an underreporting of motor vehicle theft (and other crimes) to the FBI.  This method decreases the collection of this crime on a national level, even though the statistic may be recorded accurately within the reporting jurisdiction.

## What is NIBRS?[4]

In the late 1970's, the FBI and its law enforcement agency partners saw a need for a better reporting program that not only included a host of expanded crime categories, but more comprehensive data about crime incidents. In 1991, a blueprint was developed for a new data

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[4] https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/nibrs-user-manual pg.7-9
https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/ucr/a-guide-to-understanding-nibrs.pdf/view pg. 1-2

collection program, named the National Incident-Based Reporting System (NIBRS). Incident-based data is information about specific details of occurrences of crime including (but not limited to) information about victims, offenders, times, and locations for one or more offenses in the occurrence. The incident-based data helps to provide a more detailed understanding of crime than the SRS.

NIBRS will collect information on incidents of crime within an agency and geographic location by expanding the ten SRS offenses to 52 Group A offenses within 24 crime categories. In addition, 10 Group B offenses will include arrest only information. (See NIBRS Quick Facts for Group A and B offenses)[5].

LEA's can report up to 10 offense types that are specified in the Group A offenses categories per incident. This can be from one victim and one offender incidents to those with multiple victims, offenders, offenses, property loss types, and arrestees. The information that is collected in Group B offenses pertain to arrest date, age, sex, race, and ethnicity of arrestees.

NIBRS measures a wider volume and scope of crime than has previously been counted with SRS. This kind of information will give a true picture of the crime occurring in the city, county and state and is a tool that can be used for the allocation for resources.

## Advantages of NIBRS[6]
In 2017, the FBI released a document titled "Benefits of NIBRS Participation." The document outlined the advantage NIBRS gives over SRS. The full potential of NIBRS will identify with precision where and when crime takes place, what form it takes and characteristics of the victim and perpetrator(s).  Providing this type of information to law enforcement will help them better understand crime in their jurisdiction and provides an expanded opportunity to allocate resources to address it. The notable differences that give NIBRS an advantage over SRS are:

- No Hierarchy Rule: In NIBRS, law enforcement agencies (LEAs) report every offense occurring during an incident, unlike the SRS.

- Greater Specificity in Reporting Offenses: When LEAs use NIBRS they can report offenses for 24 Group A offense categories (including 52 specific crimes). NIBRS also captures arrest data for the Group A offense and 10 Group B offense categories (including 10 crimes). NIBRS collection of details of crime incidents allows for greater specificity in reporting.

- Expanded Victim-to-Offender Relationship Data: In NIBRS, LEAs can report a victim's relationship to the offender(s) when the individual was the victim of a Crime Against Person, such as an assault offense, homicide offense, kidnapping/abduction, or sex offense. LEAs also report victim-to-offender relationship data for robbery (Crimes Against Property) because one of its elements is an assault, which makes it a violent crime.

- Expanded Circumstance Reporting: NIBRS allows LEAs to report circumstance data for aggravated assault. In addition, NIBRS permits the entry of up to two circumstance codes for each murder or aggravated assault.

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[5] https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/ucr/nibrs-quick-facts.pdf/view
[6] https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2017/resource-pages/benefits-of-nibrs-participation_gen-res.pdf
https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/are-you-ready-how-norman-ok-uses-nibrs/

- Association of Update Reports:  NIBRS allows for updated information that is tied to the original incident when it becomes available.

- Identification of Common Problems or Trends: NIBRS will help LEAs with identification of common crime problems or trends among similar jurisdictions. Agencies can then work together to develop possible solutions or proactive strategies for addressing the issues.

An article in *Police Chief Online* titled, *"Are You Ready? How Norman, Oklahoma Uses NIBRS"* outlines how Norman Police Department transitioned to NIBRS reporting and the benefits they experienced from it. Two examples of success that Norman PD has had with NIBRS reporting are as follows:

NIBRS data helped Norman PD with addressing theft from unlocked vehicles. The NIBRS data showed an increase in the crime of theft from a vehicle, detailing the times and locations where the thefts were occurring. Norman PD was able to take a proactive approach in working with volunteers in the community to distribute flyers asking residents to keep their vehicles locked, along with increased targeted patrols. Using NIBRS data helped Norman PD to have great success with influencing the crime trend for the community.

Another  example on how NIBRS data helped Norman PD was when they began to see an increase in vehicle thefts from residential garages. Residents were leaving their vehicles unlocked in their garages and thieves were using garage door remotes to access the garages to steal the vehicles. NIBRS data was able to show elements pertaining to location and offense types along with stolen property. This data gave Norman PD the ability to increase patrols in these neighborhoods and engaged the public about keeping their vehicles locked. The result was a decrease in the number of vehicle thefts. The results that Norman PD achieved would not have been possible under SRS.

## Concern about NIBRS[7]
Law enforcement agencies have expressed concern that when transitioning to NIBRS the reported crime rate will go up tremendously. In 2014, the FBI analyzed  all the crime data from 6,299 law enforcement agencies that had already converted to NIBRS reporting. After reviewing the data and adding back in the Hierarchy Rule, the percentage of increase nationally ranged from 0.4 up to 2.7 percent based on the crime category. Over the course of several years, the reported increase in crime volume because of NIBRS will be eliminated with trending. It is important to remember NIBRS does not cause an increase in crime; the crime has  already occurred, it is simply being reported more accurately using this reporting method.

## Crime Data Explorer[8]
Crime Date Explorer (CDE) is a web-based platform that works in conjunction with NIBRS and SRS for users to query, sort, filter, view and download crime data. CDE provides read only access; it is not a portal for submitting or modifying data. For crime data to become part of the UCR dataset, agencies must submit the data through the UCR Program and adhere to the UCR Program's standards of quality and accountability.

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[7] https://ucr.fbi.gov/nibrs/2014/resource-pages/effects_of_nibrs_on_crime_statistics_final.pdf pg.12
[8] https://www.policechiefmagazine.org/tech-talk-crime-data-explorer-uniform-crime-reporting-data-with-a-focus-on-nibrs/ https://crime-data-explorer.fr.cloud.gov/

## NIBRS and SRS in CDE
The FBI will place greater emphasis on NIBRS over SRS as the FBI prepares to retire SRS on January 1, 2021.  However, the FBI will continue to publish SRS and NIBRS data at least through 2020. Which means the datasets will be available through both traditional publications and through CDE ensuring that users of NIBRS and SRS will continue to have access to datasets through this transitional phase.

## Customizable features
Users of CDE can customize their experience with the crime data by accessing the variety of resources and reports available for agencies or areas that have submitted NIBRS data as follows:

- Downloads of participation and population data
- Links to state and federal UCR resources and supplemental resources for further study
- Estimated crime rates
- Data from customizable ranges of times, including numbers of different types of crimes in two, five, or ten years increments
- Victim and offender demographics and relationships
- Offense characteristics like weapons and links to other offenses
- A clickable glossary to help users understand terms

## Mandating NIBRS
The FBI was asked if any of the 23 states that ATPA's are positioned in currently have state legislation, statutes, rule or policy that is mandating NIBRS reporting for all law enforcement agencies. Their response was Mississippi is the only state that has a specific NIBRS reporting mandate in statute. However, 36 states do have crime reporting mandates in place, with the exception of Arizona, Texas, Hawaii and Florida.

## ATPA's States Transitions Status
Using the FBI's CDE interactive map, ATPA directors can see the percentage of law enforcement agencies that have transitioned to NIBRS by state. This will assist ATPA directors to understand how their state is progressing with the transition. The percentage does not show the LEAs that are in the process of certification with the FBI.  Below is a breakdown for each state with ATPAs:

| State Name | Number of Law Enforcement Agencies | Percentage Completed |
|---|---|---|
| Arizona | 115 | 7% |
| California | 737 | 0% |
| Colorado | 221 | 98% |
| Florida | 602 | 0% |
| Georgia | 530 | 5% |
| Hawaii | 3 | 0% |
| Illinois | 656 | 0% |
| Iowa | 252 | 90% |
| Kansas | 428 | 85% |
| Louisiana | 196 | 16% |

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|---|---|---|
| Maryland | 155 | 1% |
| Michigan | 655 | 96% |
| Minnesota | 346 | 4% |
| New Jersey | 576 | 0% |
| New Mexico | 118 | 1% |
| New York | 576 | 0% |
| Pennsylvania | 1494 | 2% |
| Rhode Island | 109 | 96% |
| Texas | 957 | 27% |
| Utah | 128 | 57% |
| Virginia | 435 | 96% |
| Washington | 254 | 91% |
| Wisconsin | 429 | 38% |

## NIBRS State Certification Requirements[9]

The national UCR Program must certify state UCR Programs and law enforcement agencies before they are permitted to submit NIBRS data for inclusion in the national database and for publication. To be NIBRS-certified means the data submitted during the NIBRS certification process was consistent with national UCR Program standards. To become certified, agencies and state Programs must submit incident-based data for six consecutive months and meet the following criteria:

- Provide evidence its NIBRS reporting system is compatible with the national UCR Program's system and follows NIBRS technical specifications.

- Demonstrate its ability to meet deadlines, respond to FBI queries and requests, and update and correct submissions as requested by the national UCR Program in a timely manner.

- Maintain, at a minimum, a 2-year database of NIBRS submissions with the ability to update incidents from previous years.

- Sustain an error rate of 4 percent or less for three separate, consecutive data submissions. The FBI defines the error rate as the number of rejected reports over the number of reports submitted. A full list of errors is included in the *NIBRS Technical Specification*.

Once an agency or state has been NIBRS certified, it must maintain its data quality standards and an error rate of 4 percent or less. If an agency or state makes significant enhancements or replaces its records management system, it must go through the NIBRS certification process again to become re-certified.

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[9] https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/ucr/nibrs-state-certification-requirements.pdf/view

**UCR/NIBRS Point of Contacts**

A list for each state UCR Point of Contact can be found at:
https://www.fbi.gov/file-repository/ucr/state-ucr-program-contacts.pdf/view

If you have any questions about NIBRS, you can reach out to the NIBRS support staff by email at UCR-NIBRS@fbi.gov or by phone at 304-625-9999

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